

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest Lit Log #1, Pahomov
Ben Fernandez-Sheinbaum
November 2024

Response #2 - How has the book encouraged you to (re)consider your own relationship with the authority figures and the mandatory structures of your life? Reference specific passages from the text for detailed comparison or contrast with your own experiences.

Me and McMurphy's Shared Rebellion

In a many ways, rebellion has fueled my character and personality out of my strong sense of curiosity. My parents can attest, that ever since I was little I have asked "why" to everything, a habit I have never grown out of. To this day, I question most authority in my life especially if they enforce structure that I do not understand the reasoning for. It is in my own belief to see this quality as a good thing, not as a "rebellious teenager" bad thing. I do not lash out or make my rebellion dramatic, I simply question the authority around me because I do not think I should do anything without knowing the reason why.

In *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, the protagonist Randle McMurphy shares a similar ideology with me. He constantly questions authority and the system that oppresses him. Specifically, he questions the rules and regulations in the ward put in place by Nurse Ratched. It does not matter how big or small the oppression is, he will ask why. When McMurphy wakes up early and goes to brush his teeth before the usual hour, the Black Boys who run the operations of the ward stop him because there are regulations to when the patients can brush their teeth. To that, he says, "'And, lordy, can you imagine? Teeth bein' brushed at six-thirty, six-twenty—who can tell? maybe even six o'clock. Yeah, I can see your point.'"(83) McMurphy's sarcasm in this quote demonstrates how he does not understand the rules and thinks they're ridiculous. It shows

how even something as little as brushing his teeth if McMurphy does not understand why he has to follow these rules, he will rebel.

As the novel progresses, McMurphy's rebellion becomes more dramatic and he begins to fear the consequences that come with that. When he realizes how his rebellion may add more time to his sentence, he lashes out and says "I couldn't figure it out at first, why you guys were coming to me as some sort of savior..." "Why those slippery bastards have conned me" (165-166). These fears become truths as we learn on that Nurse Ratched gives him a warning, planning to take away the room he plays poker in, one of the symbols of his liberty in the ward. Hearing the news, McMurphy lashes out, walks into the nurse's office and breaks the window demonstrating his rebellion.

Although he does question authority for valid reasons, McMurphy's rebellion originates from disruption for disruption's sake. He even makes a bet just to see how quickly he can rattle the nurse and make her "break". My rebellion is rooted in curiosity and not taking things just because I am told to. In school, with the new phone rule; a rule which I frankly think is dramatic. I have gotten in trouble because I refused to turn my phone in. I have explained to teachers that I will not be on my phone and that I simply do not want to or feel comfortable giving it in, but they do not have a valid reason for me to do so. That is why I rebel because I do not understand the reasoning. While I did not shatter any windows or disrupt for disruption's sake, I did go against the rules put in place because of my own beliefs and questioning of the system. Also, like McMurphy when he realizes the consequences of his rebellion and stops for a while, I know my limits. If a teacher does happen to tell me to put my phone away, I know it is not worth getting in trouble over, so I will listen.

Since reading *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, I have reconsidered the power dynamics in such situations. McMurphy's rebellion exposes the arbitrary nature of certain rules. When McMurphy brushes his teeth before he is supposed to and is reprimanded for his actions, he defies because they just want to control with no rhyme or reason behind it. This moment mirrors my own experiences of defying authority not out of rebellion but out of principle. It affirms my belief that authority should have valid reasoning behind why they impose the rules that they do. That said, McMurphy's journey has also made me reflect on the risks of rebellion. While his defiance exposes flaws in the Nurse's system, it also shows the consequences of pushing too far. I've learned to challenge authority while also working within its boundaries to not be punished too harshly. I've realized that there are more right ways to enact change, rather than blatant defiance. This has led me to organizations like SLA's student government, giving me valid, real power to question authority and make real changes in systems of authority.